

TOP SECRET

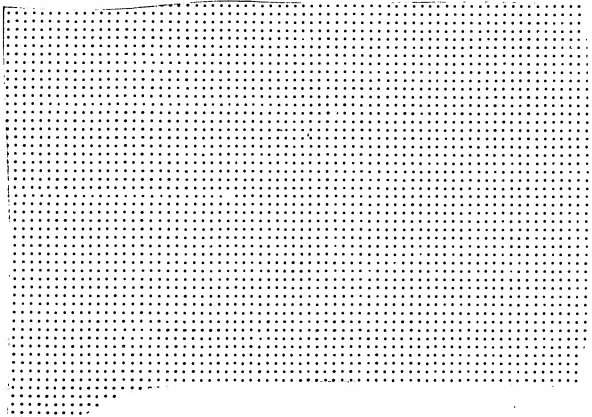
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November 25, 1958

Briefing on Status of Berlin Crisis

1. Developments, 18 Nov. - 25 Nov.



b. Ambassador Smirnov on November 20 informed Chancellor Adenauer of Soviet plans to abolish the "Occupation Statute" for Berlin. The Chancellor stated emphatically that the action proposed by the Soviets would not contribute to the relaxation of tension but, on the contrary, would heighten it. He felt that the reaction of the Three Western Powers would be negative and that the move would be adversely

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- 2 -

received by the German public and would undoubtedly lead to a further deterioration of German-Soviet relations.

d. Chancellor Adenauer addressed a letter to the Secretary of State, received November 21, pointing to the gravity of the situation, observing that the first Allied concession will not be the last, and suggesting talks between the governments of the UK, France, the Federal Republic, and the US as soon as the details of the Soviet position on Berlin become known.

e. An ad hoc committee has been established including representatives of State, Defense and other interested agencies, plus the British and French, to consider the Berlin problem.

f. On 22 November, in response to the urging of Adenauer, Macmillan sent the following message to Khrushchev:

"I am sending you this personal message to tell you of the anxiety which your recent statements on Berlin have caused me. I must tell you frankly that I find

TOP SECRET



those statements difficult to reconcile with your many previous expressions of the desire to reduce tension in the world. The British Government have every intention of upholding their rights in Berlin which are soundly based.

"That also I believe to be the position of our Allies as is well known to you. At the moment discussions are taking place in Geneva. I still profoundly hope that fruitful results will come both from the political conference on nuclear tests and from the technical conference on measures against surprise attack. I cannot imagine anything more calculated to increase tension at a moment of opportunity for an improvement in our relations than the kind of action which your statements appear to foreshadow. I hope therefore that you will seriously consider what I say before deciding to proceed to such action."

g. On 22 November (Saturday) the State Department instructed Embassy Bonn to submit to the UK and France there the proposed text of a note to be delivered in Moscow ostensibly on 24 November (Monday). This message, noting the announced intentions of the USSR with regard to Berlin, emphasizes that the proposed Soviet action would be invalid in international law and would be hardly consistent with the Soviet Government's protestations of a desire to relax international tensions. Embassy London has since notified State that the Foreign Office approved the tripartite demarche, subject to possible suggestions from legal advisers. The French, however (Couve de Murville), feel that delivery this soon would be premature; and, since the Soviets have not yet taken action, would give the impression that we are "nervous." Accordingly, the sending of the note has been delayed.

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h. An offshoot of the proposed tripartite note to the Soviets is the matter of publication of such a note. The Ambassador in Moscow, Llewellyn Thompson, favors publication because of its effect on the Germans. Whitney and the British Foreign Office feel that a note not published would have a greater deterrent effect.

2. Reactions of the Countries Concerned

a. Germany

Official German as well as press reaction unanimously supports a firm stand on Berlin now. The Foreign Minister summarized his views on German opinion to Ambassador Bruce as follows: There is universal belief that any concessions to the GDR by the Allies (specifically the showing of documents even under protest in order to maintain access to Berlin) will start an avalanche which nothing can stop and which will have catastrophic consequences for Europe and the Free World. Thereby "The West will have lost the first bloodless blow of World War Three." A firm stand now will cause the Soviets to back down. He referred to Berlin Mayor Brandt's recent statements and to Bundestag President Gerstenmaier's mention of the possibility of the Federal Republic breaking off relations with Moscow as evidence of undoubted solid German support for firm Allied reaction.

Other West German sources bear out the same view. On 25 November the State Department reported that Mayor Brandt of



Berlin has made it plain to the deputy commandants of Berlin that the West Berliners expect the allied occupying powers to maintain their right to be in Berlin as conquerors, subject in no sense to control by any German officials or agencies. Alluding to reports that the allies might submit to control by Soviet Zone German officials as agents of the USSR, Brandt asserted that submission to any such controls would destroy the western allied position in Berlin.

The views of the Germans are well summarized by the message from Adenauer to Secretary Dulles which is being appended for your information.

b. UK





c. France

Earlier in the week Embassy Paris reported that the working-level in the French Foreign Office had recommended to Couve that the Allies adopt a policy of firmness in the face of Soviet threats.



3. Views of Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson, in Moscow

The "Afternoon Summary," Department of State, dated 21 Nov., included the following:

"Prompt, Forceful Stand on Berlin Advocated - Thompson in Moscow believes that while the USSR would refrain from any action which it was convinced would cause us to use force, once it had turned its functions in Berlin over to the East German regime it would take great risks rather than back down in the face of our counteraction. In this circumstance he thinks our worst policy would be one in which there is any uncertainty as to what to do.

4. Views of General Norstad

On 16 November, General Norstad informed Secretary McElroy and General Twining that unless directed otherwise, he will order

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- 9 -

5. Developments on 26 November

a. Discussions on 26 November seem to center chiefly on the way to approach a possible administrative harassment of the land lines to Berlin on the part of the GDR.

b. Talk of tripartite positions shifted from possible note to Soviets to a possible note to the Federal Republic of Germany. A copy of the draft note to Germany is available. Again, the French are reticent to join. The British are willing to join a tripartite statement but feel that if the French demur, a unilateral U.S. note would be better.

c. Adenauer and De Gaulle are to meet today and Berlin will be an important item on their agenda.

d. An unconfirmed radio report this morning stated that a covered convoy was permitted to pass the guards without interference. This will be checked into further.

TOP SECRET



TOP SECRET



- 8 -

the dispatch of a normal Berlin-Helmstad convoy with authority to "extricate US military personnel and equipment by minimum force necessary if the Soviets again detain and prompt protest does not effect early release" (2-3 hours). This stand was overtaken by the suspension of convoys by the JCS on 18 November [REDACTED] [REDACTED] (Mr. Murphy met with the JCS later in the week.)

On 24 November, Houghton (France) advised the State Department that he and Norstad agree that there is considerable merit in suggestions for Western initiative in proposing a four-power conference on the German question. He reports that Whitney, who was in Paris Saturday, supports Norstad's view that we should take a forthright stand and make clear our determination to remain in Berlin.

(This has been done, it would appear, by both your statement and that of Mr. Nixon on 25 November.)

Houghton finally points out that a conference would assist in preventing our being maneuvered into a position of appearing to oppose Soviet withdrawal from East Berlin.

NOV 25 1963

TOP SECRET



6. Summary

In summary, the following points stand out in all the discussions:

a. None of the Western governments nor members thereof advocate pulling out of Berlin.

b. The main issues of discussion are: (1) the degree with which the Western powers can deal with the East German government without undue loss of prestige or undue damage to Adenauer, (2) the procedures to be followed (including the degree of force to be used) in the event of serious harassment by East German police, and (3) timing of Western moves, such as the proposed tripartite demarche to the Soviets or the proposed message to the Federal Republic.

c. [REDACTED]

TOP SECRET